

A mountain of presents was stacked near the door of the pantry and Polacek; his wife, Shari; and their four children were busy distributing gifts to people who waited in an orderly fashion.

Mrs. Polacek said she is pleased that the family could bring some joy to people, and she wanted her children to learn that it is better to give than receive and that some people are struggling. The children are Bill Jr., 10; Blake 7; Madison, 4; and Carter, 10 months.

"Last year, we lost track of Blake and couldn't find him anywhere until we looked back at the tables where people were eating," Mrs. Polacek said.

"There he was eating a turkey dinner and joining right in with some of the folks. We try to teach the kids that in terms of values, you get what you give."

Also on hand were Mr. Polacek's mother, Sarah, and stepfather, George Mihalaki of Windber. Polacek's father, John is deceased.

Mrs. Mihalaki said that one act of kindness many years ago has left an impression on the entire family.

"We created the Polacek Family Human Needs Fund, where we all initially donated money to give to a charity," she said.

"Now we have fund-raisers during the year to raise a little more. We usually earmark the money to one charity a year."

But the St. Vincent de Paul effort is separate from the family's donation.

Mr. Polacek said he usually gives up to \$2,500 for the gifts.

"I buy from Boscov's and they generously give a discount on each item," he said.

"That way we can give more gifts and the store even gift wraps each present."

The dinner also marked the first time that someone spent the afternoon singing carols for the people.

Shawn McConville of Geistown entertained to the delight of every one on hand.

It was a wonderful Christmas celebration. There was good food, good music, laughter and fun. Most of all, there was love.

TRIBUTE TO MRS. ANNIE JEAN CAMPBELL

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 1, 2000

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand here today on the first

day of "Black History Month" to record yet another first for African-Americans in my home state of Mississippi. On November 2, 1999, Mrs. Annie Jean Campbell became the first African-American woman to be elected to serve on the Board of Supervisors in Montgomery County, MI.

Mrs. Campbell, the daughter of Joe and Annie Roby not only became the first African-American woman to be elected to the position, but she is the first woman ever. Mrs. Campbell has lived in Montgomery County all of her life and is dedicated to the service of the people. As wife and mother of three, Ms. Campbell has already exemplified the patience and understanding needed to be an effective representative to the public.

Mr. Speaker, as I stand here and think of the accomplishment Mrs. Campbell has made, I become re-energized in the fact that there is always a possibility to change and that Mississippi continues to progress and create a new legacy.

MARKING THE RETIREMENT OF JOHN P. WEISS

HON. SAM GEJDENSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 1, 2000

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend John P. Weiss for nearly thirty years of service to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. John is more than an extraordinary public servant, he is a humanitarian and a great advocate on behalf of the American people.

On January 3, 2000, John Weiss officially retired as Officer in Charge of the Hartford, Connecticut INS Office. John's leadership and commitment to excellence has ensured high quality and efficient service for immigrants and their families living in Connecticut. John set a standard that all of us in public service should work to emulate.

In 1988, my office was inundated with calls from U.S. citizens who were filing their I-130 petitions for their foreign born spouses at the INS Service Center in Vermont. Unfortunately, the processing time in Vermont was quite

lengthy. After approaching John with this problem and expressing the frustration of my constituents, he agreed to look into the problem. John then implemented a new processing policy for I-130 and I-485 petitions filed by citizens on behalf of their spouses. He clearly empathized with the stress they were feeling due to being separated from their spouses. John allowed the Hartford INS office to begin accepting I-130 petitions from citizens for their spouses. This accelerated the processing time tremendously. He truly made a positive difference in the lives of thousands of people. Families were able to reunite much sooner than they had originally expected.

I have remarked many times throughout the years that Connecticut is indeed very lucky to have such a compassionate and caring individual such as John Weiss running the INS office. John's career is quite distinguished. One of his most remarkable assignments began in 1973 when he was assigned to investigate Nazi war criminals. John spent a great deal of time interviewing Holocaust victims and chronicling the atrocities that occurred during the Second World War and tracking war criminals who might have attempted to fraudulently enter the United States. I know this was an experience that deeply affected John's life and perspective on the world.

Whenever John Weiss learned about a problem or an individual with extenuating circumstances, he took steps to address it. It never mattered how busy he was with his duties, he always made time to address the needs of every constituent. In this respect, he is a model for all of us in public service.

Mr. Speaker, John Weiss is a public servant in the very best tradition of our country. He has worked tirelessly on behalf of the citizens of Connecticut and provided the highest quality service. He has also brought a sense of compassion to his work.

I am proud to be able to join his former colleagues and members of the community in thanking John for his service and commitment to bettering the lives of immigrants and their families.